

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A SERIAL STORY BY THE AUTHOR OF "BLACK SHEEP."

BOOK III.

CHAPTER VIII. TOO LATE.

DR. OSBORNE'S opinion of Mr. Creswell's serious state, and the absolute necessity for the old gentleman's immediate withdrawal from everything calculated to cause worry or excitement, and consequently from the election, was soon promulgated through Brocksopp, and caused the greatest consternation amongst the supporters of the Tory policy. Mr. Teesdale was summoned at once to Woolgreaves, and there had a long interview with Mrs. Creswell, who convinced him—he had been somewhat incredulous at first, being a wary man of the world, and holding the principle that doubt and disbelief were on the whole the safest and most remunerative doctrines—that it was physically impossible for her husband to continue the contest. The interview took place in the large, carpeted, and furnished bow-window recess on the landing immediately outside the door of Mr. Creswell's room, and, as Mr. Teesdale afterwards remarked in conversation with Mr. Gould, whom he summoned by telegraph from London, there was no question of any malingering or shamming on the old gentleman's part, as he could be heard groaning, poor old boy, in a very lamentable manner, and Dr. Osborne, who called at the time, said his patient was by no means out of the wood yet. Mr. Teesdale's talk, professional as it was, was tinged with more sympathy and respect for the sufferer than were Mr. Gould's remarks. Mr. Teesdale had other relations in business with Mr. Creswell; he was his land agent and general business representative, had known him intimately

for years, and had experienced innumerable kindnesses at his hands; whereas, Mr. Gould had simply made Mr. Creswell's acquaintance in his capacity of Conservative candidates' dry-nurse, and Mr. Creswell was to him merely an errant and peccant nine-pin, which, from fate or its own shortcomings, it was impossible for him, skilful "setter-up" though he were, to put properly on end. He saw this after five minutes' conversation with his local representative, Mr. Teesdale, and saw that there was an end of his chance, so far as Brocksopp was concerned. "It won't do here, Teesdale," he said; "this finishes our business! It hasn't looked very promising throughout, but if this old character had gone to the poll, and specially if he had said one or two things you could have crammed him with on the nomination day, we might have pulled through! You see he's so eminently respectable; though he, of course, is not to be compared with this young chap that Potter and Fyfe's people have got hold of—and where they dug him up astonishes me! Newspaper office, eh? 'Gad, we haven't got much of that sort of stuff in the newspaper offices of our party—however, though the old gentleman couldn't hold a candle to this young Joyce, I'm not sure that we couldn't have got him in. They'd have had the show of hands and the hurrying and all that, but we know how much that's worth, and what with Sir George Neal's people and our own, we could have run him deuced close, even if we didn't win. Nuisance it is, too, for he's kept us from running anybody else. There was young Clare, Sir Willis Clare's eldest son, was up in Pall Mall the other day, ready to go in for anything, and with rather a hankering for this place, which his father sat for once; but I said we were booked, and now—confound it!"

Mr. Teesdale was scarcely less upset. He talked vaguely of getting Mr. Creswell's consent, so soon as he was sufficiently recovered to be able to entertain the topic, to the substitution of some good Conservative candidate in his place; but Mr. Gould treated this proposition with a scornful laugh, and told him that they would have had to do all they knew to pull Mr. Creswell through, and that to attempt to run anybody else at that late period would be madness. So a private meeting of the principal supporters of the party was held at the Lion, and Mr. Gould—who had run up to London in the interim, and had an interview with the chief wire-pullers—announced that in consequence of Mr. Creswell's unfortunate illness, it had been decided to withdraw him from the candidature, and, as there was no prospect of success for any one else who might be started in the same interest, to refrain from contesting the borough at this election. This announcement was received in dead silence, broken by Mr. Croke's frank and outspoken denunciation of the cowardice, the "tremulousness," the "not to put too foin a pint upon it, the funk" which seemed to have seized upon some as "owt t' know better!" The meeting was held in the evening, most of the company present had steaming glasses of grog before them, and Mr. Croke's outspoken oratory elicited a vast amount of applause and knocking on the tables with the stalwart feet of the tumblers. A young farmer of the neighbourhood, popular from his openhandedness and his skill in rifle-shooting—he was champion badge-holder in the local volunteers—rose and suggested that any such abject surrender as that proposed was ill-advised and inexpedient, and sat down, after finishing a long rambling speech, the purport of which was that some one should be put forward to fill the gap created by Mr. Creswell's lamented but unavoidable illness. That the gap should be filled, seemed to be a popular idea; but each of the ten or twelve speakers who subsequently addressed the meeting had different people for the post: and it was not until Mr. Teesdale pointed out the utter futility of attempting to begin the fight anew under a fresh banner, confessing that they would have had very great difficulty in bringing matters to a successful issue even with all the prestige of Mr. Creswell's name and position, that it seemed to dawn upon the meeting that their chance was hopeless. This had been told them at the outset by

Mr. Gould; but he was from London, and, consequently, in the ideas of the farmers present, steeped in duplicity of every kind, and labouring under an impossibility of truth-speaking. Mr. Teesdale had infinitely more weight with his audience. They knew him as a man whose word was to be relied on, and the impossibility of doing anything beyond swallowing the bitter pill was acknowledged among them from that moment. True, that the pill was so bitter as to require the consumption of an extraordinary amount of brandy-and-water to get it down, a fact which helped to console old Tilley, the landlord, for the shock to his political principles. It is to be noted, also, that after the withdrawal of Messrs. Gould and Teesdale, the meeting gave itself up to harmony of a lugubrious character, and dismal ditties, mixed with fierce denunciations of democrats and reformers, were borne away on the still night air.

So, within a day or two, the walls of Brocksopp were covered with placards signed in Mr. Creswell's name, setting forth the sad cause which prevented him from further exertion in the interests of freedom and purity of election, lamenting the impossibility of being able conscientiously to recommend a proper candidate to the constituency at so short a notice, but bidding the electors not to despair so long as there remained to them a House of Lords and an omniscient aristocracy. This document, which was the production of Mr. Teesdale (Mr. Gould had been called away to superintend certain other strongholds where the fortifications showed signs of crumbling), was supplemented by the copy of a medical certificate from Dr. Osborne, which stated that Mr. Creswell's condition was such as to imperatively demand the utmost quietude, and that any such excitement as that to be caused by entering on an election contest would probably cost him his life.

The news was already known at the enemy's head-quarters. On the morning after the meeting at the Lion, Mr. Harrington, who had been duly informed of all that had taken place by a spy in whom he could place implicit confidence, walked over to Shuttleworth, the nearest telegraphic station, and thence despatched the following enigmatic message to his firm: "Brocksopp Stakes. Old Horse broken down in training. Our Colt will walk over." It happened that Mr. Potter was alone when this telegram arrived, and to him it was utterly

unintelligible; but Mr. Fyfe, who came in shortly afterwards, and who was acquainted with and tolerant of the vagaries of his clerk's intellect, soon guessed at the situation, and explained it to his partner. So it fell out that the election for Brock-sopp, which had attracted attention even amongst great people in the political world, and which was looked forward to with intense interest in the neighbourhood, passed off in the quietest and tamest manner. The mere fact of the knowledge that there was to be no opposition, no contest, robbed the nomination day of all its interest to hundreds of farmers in outlying places, who did not care to give up a day's work when there was to be no "scrimmage" as a requital for their sacrifice of time; and the affair was consequently thoroughly orderly and commonplace. There were comparatively few persons present, and five minutes after Joyce's speech, in which he returned thanks for the honour done to him, and alluded with much nice feeling to his late opponent's illness, had concluded, the market square was deserted, and the clumsy hustings remained the sole memorial of the event to which so many had looked forward for so long.

Jack Byrne was horribly disgusted at the tame manner in which the victory had been won. The old man's life had been passed in the arena: he was never so happy as when he or some of his chosen friends were on the verge of conflict; and to see the sponge thrown up, when the boy whom he had trained with so much care, and on whom he placed every dependence, was about to meet with a foeman worthy of his steel, who would take an immense deal of beating, and whom it would be a signal honour to vanquish, annoyed the old free lance beyond measure. It was only by constantly repeating to himself that his boy, his Walter, whom he had picked up starving and friendless at Bliffkins's coffee-house, was now a member of parliament, with the opportunity of uttering in the British senate those doctrines which he had so often thundered forth amidst the vociferous applause of the club, those opinions with which he, old Jack Byrne, had indoctrinated him, that he was able to perceive that, although without any grand blaze of triumph, a great result had been achieved. Mr. Harrington, too, was by no means pleased that all his jockeyship should have been thrown away on so tame an event. He admitted

as much to Mr. South, the local agent, who was mildly rejoicing in the bloodless victory, and who was grateful for the accident by which success had been secured. Mr. Harrington entirely dissented from this view of the case. "I call it hard," he said, "deuced hard, that when I had reduced the thing to a moral, when I had made all arrangements for a waiting race, letting the other side go ahead, as I knew they would, making the running like mad, and getting pumped before the distance; we waiting on them quietly, and then just at the last coming with a rush, and beating them on the post, I say it is deuced hard when a fellow has given all his time and brains to arranging this, to find he's reduced to a mere w. o. To be sure, as you say, one collars the stakes all the same, but still, it ain't sport!"

There was one person, however, to whom the knowledge that the election had gone off flatly was delightful—Marian Creswell. As she had stood that night in her dressing-gown, with her dishevelled hair hanging over her shoulders, listening to Dr. Osborne's verdict on her husband's state, she had seen in his strongly pronounced opinion a safe, plausible, and immediate chance of escape from that most dreaded defeat by Walter Joyce at the election; and though she had apparently received the decision with deepest regret, she was inwardly delighted. At all events, there would be no absolute victory. Walter Joyce could not go away and tell his friends in the great world in London that he had defeated his adversary. No one could say what might have been the issue of the contest had Mr. Creswell's health not given way, and Marian was perfectly confident that Walter's chivalrous nature would prevent his ever mentioning to any one the interview which had taken place between him and her, or what passed thereat. On the whole, it was the best thing that could have happened for her. She had for some time foreseen that there was no chance of establishing herself in society through the election as she had once hoped, and anything would be better than that she should suffer defeat—absolute defeat—in a matter which she had so nearly at heart.

Anything? her husband's illness, dangerous illness, for instance? Yes; anything. She had never pretended to herself that she had loved Mr. Creswell. She had done her duty by him strictly, even to casting out all thoughts, all remembrance, of

the lover of her youth; and it is an odd and not a very gratifying sign of the weakness of the human heart to think that Marian had frequently taken credit to herself for the sense of wifely duty which had induced her to eliminate all memories of early days, and all recollections of Walter Joyce, from her mind. Her husband was very much her senior; she could not have hoped that he would live very long, and if he were to be removed—There was, however, no question of that at present. Within a few days of the attack to which Dr. Osborne had been called, Mr. Creswell had recovered consciousness, and gradually had so far mended as to be able to take interest in what was passing round him. One of his first expressed wishes was to see Mr. Benthall, and when that gentleman, who was very much touched by the sight of the old man's altered expression, and wandering eyes, and strange twitching face, was left alone with him, he asked hurriedly, but earnestly, for news of the girls, his nieces, and seemed much relieved when he heard they were well and happy. To Marian her husband's manner was wonderfully altered. He was kind always, occasionally affectionate, but he seemed to have lost all that utter trust, that reliant worship, which had so characterised his attentions to her in the early days of their marriage. Of the election he spoke freely, expressing his sorrow for the disappointment which his friends would suffer owing to his forced defection, and his pleasure that, since a representative of opposite politics must necessarily be chosen, the town would have the advantage of returning a man with the high character which he had heard on all sides ascribed to Mr. Joyce. When, on the evening of the nomination day, Mr. Teesdale waited on his chief, and detailed to him all that had taken place, dwelling on the mention which Joyce had made of his absent opponent, and the high opinion which he had expressed of him, the old gentleman was very much moved, and sank back on his pillows perfectly overcome. Marian by no means appreciated Mr. Teesdale that evening, and got rid of him as soon as possible. She was much pained at the display of what she considered her husband's weakness, and determined on following Dr. Osborne's advice as to removing him as soon as he was able to travel. It was noted just at that time that Mrs. Creswell spoke far more favourably of her husband's state of health than she had

done for some time previously, and betrayed an unmistakable desire to get him away from Brocksopp neighbourhood and influences without delay.

When Dr. Osborne was consulted on the matter, he said that as the election, which was the greatest risk of excitement for his patient, had now passed by, it would depend greatly on Mr. Creswell's own feelings and wishes as to whether he should leave his home. A change would most probably be beneficial; but the doctor knew that his old friend had always been wedded to his home, and had a great aversion to being away from it when no absolute necessity for his absence existed. However, Mr. Creswell, when appealed to, seemed to have lost any vivid interest in this as in all other matters of his life. He answered, mechanically, that he would do just as they thought best, that he had no feeling one way or the other about it, only let them decide. He said this in the wearied tone which had now become habitual to him; and he looked at them with dim, lustreless eyes, out of which all expression seemed to have faded. Dr. Osborne tried to rouse him, but with such little success that he began to think Mr. Creswell's malady must have made rapid progress, and he took an early opportunity of submitting him to another examination.

Marian was not aware of this. She met the doctor coming out of her husband's room. They were on semi-friendly terms now, and she said to him:

"I was coming to you, doctor, this afternoon. I have just settled to take Mr. Creswell away for a few weeks, but of course I wanted you to see him before he went. And now you have seen him?"

"Yes; I have just left him."

"And what do you say?"

"I say that he must not be moved, Mrs. Creswell; that he must remain here at home, with every comfort that he may require, and that he must be carefully watched and tended by us all."

"Do you find him changed—for the worse? I thought myself that I had noticed during the last few days—Do you apprehend any immediate danger?"

"He is very much changed for the worse; the disease has made great progress, and if he were suddenly disturbed or excited I would not answer for the consequences."

"I did right, then, in refusing Mr. Teesdale access to him, yesterday. There is some disputed election account, and Mr.

Teesdale was most urgent to see Mr. Creswell, but I thought it better to prevent him."

"You did perfectly right; he must be denied to everybody save those immediately around him, and all matters of business, and anything likely to excite or worry him in the least, must be studiously kept from him."

They were descending the stairs as the doctor spoke, and in the hall they found Mr. Teesdale, who had just ridden up in hot haste, and was parleying with one of the servants. He took off his hat when he saw Mrs. Creswell and the doctor, and was about to speak, but Marian was before him—"I hope you are not again wishing to see my husband, Mr. Teesdale, as I shall be compelled again to refuse you! Dr. Osborne here will tell you that I am acting in accordance with his strict orders." And the doctor then repeated to the agent all that he had just said to Marian.

"It's an uncommonly vexatious thing," said Mr. Teesdale, when the doctor had concluded: "of course it can't be helped, and whatever you say must be attended to, but it's horribly annoying."

"What is it?" asked Dr. Osborne.

"A matter of Ramsay's, that truculent brute of a fellow who holds the White Farm down Helmingham way. He's made a claim that I know the chief wouldn't acknowledge, and that consequently I daren't pay; though, knowing the fellow as I do, I'm not sure it wouldn't be safest and best in the long run."

"Why don't you act on your own responsibility, then?"

"Not I. The chief had a throw-up with this man before, and declared he would never give in to him again. He's an ill-conditioned scoundrel, and vows all kind of vengeance if he isn't paid."

"My good friend," said the doctor, "you and I know pretty well that Mr. Creswell is able to laugh at the threatened vengeance of a person like this Mr. Ramsay. I must not have my patient disturbed for any such matters. Carry on the business yourself, Teesdale. I know what trust Mr. Creswell places in you, and I know how well it is deserved."

"Then I shall tell Mr. Ramsay to go to—"

"Exactly," said the doctor, interrupting. "You could not consign him to more fitting company."

On the evening of the second day from this colloquy, Marian returned from a long

drive in her pony carriage, during which her thoughts had been of anything but a cheerful character. She had been suffering from that horrible sinking of heart which comes sometimes, we know not why, bringing with it the impression that something, we know not what, save that it is unpleasant, is impending over us. When she alighted, she inquired whether Mr. Creswell had rung for anything, and whether Dr. Osborne had called, and received answers in the negative in both cases. A letter marked "immediate" had come for master, that was all. A letter! Where was it? Mr. Barlow, the butler, had taken it up to master's room, the valet being out. Marian heard of the arrival of this letter with a strange sense of fear, and hurried up to her husband's room.

She entered noiselessly and advanced quickly to the bed. Mr. Creswell was lying back, his hands clasped in front of him, his eyes closed, his face very grey and rigid. She thought at first that he was dead, and half screamed and called him by his name, but then, without speaking, without looking, he unclasped his hands, pointed to a folded paper on the coverlet, and then resumed his former position. The letter! She took it up and read it eagerly. It was dated from the White Farm, and signed John Ramsay. It commenced with setting forth his claims to money which was due to him, and which he knew would have been paid "had the squire been about," and it proceeded to revile Mr. Teesdale, and to declare that he was robbing his employer, and "feathering his own nest." The last paragraph ran thus:

"And you must be sharp and get about again, squire, and look to your own. You are bamboozled and cheated in every way right under your nose, in your own house, by your own wife. Why it's common talk in the town how you was done in the election by Mrs. C. She had young Joyce for a sweetheart long before she knew you, when he was a school usher, and gave him the sack and threw him over when she wanted you and your money, which she always hankered after, and took on with him again when she saw him down here, and got that old thief Osborne, which overcharges the poor for his beastly drugs, to square it and keep you out of the fun."

As Marian read and re-read this paragraph she turned sick at heart and thought she should have fainted, but was recalled to herself by a cold clammy touch on her wrist, and looking down she saw her

husband's eyes open and his lips moving. Standing over him she heard him say—"Is it true?"

"True! how can you ask me such a question! I swear it is not."

"No, no, not the last part of course! but any of it, that young man—was he fond of you—were you engaged?"

A bright flush suffused her face, but she answered steadily, "We were."

"And what made you break with him? Why did you quarrel? You don't answer. Is the letter right? Did you give him up for me? Did you let my position, my money, weigh more with you than his love and his heart? Did you do this?"

"And suppose I did—what then?" said Marian, with flashing eyes—"are you here to plead his cause? Have I not been a dutiful and a proper wife to you? You yourself have just spoken of this vile slander with the scorn it deserves! Of what then do you complain?"

"Of nothing. I complain of nothing, save perhaps of your ignorance of me! Ah, good Heavens! did you know me so little as to think that your happiness was not my aim, not so much my own! Did you not know that my love for you was so little selfish, that if I had had the least dream of your engagement to this young man, I should have taken such delight in forwarding it and providing for you both. You would have been near me still, you would have been a daughter to me, and—Lift me up! the cordial—quick!" and he fell back in a faint.

Dr. Osborne was sent for, and came at once, but it was plain to all that Mr. Creswell's end was at hand. He had two severe paroxysms of pain, and then lay perfectly still and tranquil. Marian was sitting by his bedside, and in the middle of the night she felt his hand plucking at the sleeve of her gown. She roused herself and looked at him. His eyes were open, and there was a bright, happy expression on his thin face. His mind was wandering far away, back to the early days of his poverty and his struggles, and she who had shared both was with him. He pulled Marian to him, and she leaned eagerly forward; but it was not of her he was thinking. "Jenny!" he said, and his tongue reverted to the old familiar dialect which it had not used for so many years—"Jenny! coom away, lass! Taim's oop!—that's t' mill bell ringin'! Thou'rt a brave lass, and we've had hard taim of it; but we're near t'

end now! Kiss me, Jenny! Always good and brave, lass—always——" And so he died.

ENGLISH HOP GARDENS.

ALONG the valley of the Medway, between Tunbridge and Maidstone, through Tunbridge Wells by way of Frant, Wadhurst, Ticehurst, and Mayfield, to Battle and Rye, one traverses the principal hop districts of Kent and Sussex. It is part of the geological formation which passes from Hastings to Tunbridge Wells, and rises in lofty hills at Crowborough in Ashdown forest. The hills are irregular and tossed about in all directions, for the earth's surface was the scene of strange vagaries before it settled to its present form. The district is as mixed in soil as in outline. Much of the land is very good, especially among the hops. In the midst of the rich farming of Kent one remembers with pleasure Cobbett's love of rural pursuits, his attachment to his Indian corn and his bonnet-grass, and his hatred of the potato, that "soul-debasing root." Attracted by a creeper with a very handsome blossom, growing over some houses in the main street of Tunbridge, I inquired its name. The name was lost, but the plants, I was told, had been brought there by William Cobbett.

Around Tunbridge there are various little streams and brooks running into the Medway; among these, the hops are found. Following the river towards its source, through Hartfield to East Grinstead, where it is but a little brook, I find that hops still choose to grow on, or near, its banks. From Tunbridge to Maidstone—fourteen miles—through Hadlow, Peckham, Mereworth, Wateringbury, Teston, and Barming, there are hops and orchards all the way. The prettiest orchards are those in which rows of apple-trees are mixed with filberts, cherries, and other low-growing trees. Filberts and cob-nuts do not want so much sun as the larger fruits; they need shelter, and they do not suffer from a little shade. The apple-trees, therefore, are planted wide apart, as tall standards, and are allowed to grow to a considerable height; under them, grow smaller trees, filberts, cherries, plums, damsons, and sometimes currants and gooseberries. The lower trees are kept small, and the filberts are pruned as bushes. They are all planted in rows, but a mixed orchard in full bearing looks like one mass of foliage and fruit. Inside, it is a busy scene. The orchards are often secluded within high hedges and close gates, and when picking is going on a merry humming is heard from within. The cost of picking a good crop of apples is from twopence to threepence a bushel. They are sent to London in bushel and half-bushel baskets (sieves). These belong to the salesman, who often sells and delivers the fruit, without unpacking it. Very few pears are seen in Kent; they prefer stiffer soils; the apple-tree delights in land

neither stiff, nor heavy, but good, dry, and deep. Some writers have recommended mere miniature trees, bushes, pyramids, and cordons, which can be kept small by occasionally lifting them, and by summer pruning. These are very interesting toys for those who have a taste that way, and very fine fruit can be so grown by gardeners who understand the culture. But in growing fruit for market there must be economy of labour and space; there must be no fancy work. These little trees are only one story high, whereas the apple-trees of Kent are five or six stories high, and produce five or six times as many apples, on an equal space, besides leaving room for a harvest of filberts and cherries beneath.

From the toll-gate at Maidstone I looked, on a fine August day, down the famous valley. Great billowy clouds were rolling about the sky. The forests of hops were seen in lights and shadows that changed every moment; and these contrasts, with the well-known effect of a rainy atmosphere, made the grounds, far and near, wonderfully distinct. In the course of this natural illumination I could see, throughout the green "forest," numerous patches tinged with red. These patches were the prey of the "red spider," a disease, which sometimes destroys the hops, causing every leaf to curl up as if scorched by a fire-blast. I saw hop gardens, in which the blasted leaves had all dropped off, leaving the poles with the naked bine on them. If the attack be early, the leaves and laterals push again, and some hops may be grown. Signs of the presence of red spider cause great alarm, even when the pest appears in its mildest form. The Borough market becomes agitated, and hops rise in price. A heavy rain falls, great improvement is reported, and then hops go down! This troublesome parasite is analogous to that which attacks vines, cucumbers, and melons; and it generally makes its appearance in very dry weather. If hop growers could repeal the red spider, as they did the duty, they would be happy men; there would then only be blight, fly, mould, mildew, wind, season, and foreign growers to contend against.

The immediate effect of the repeal of the hop duty was a rise of price, until the foreign growers could plant their ground and learn the art of hop growing, which they have now accomplished. The permanent effects are the enormous increase of supply and a consequent reduction of price.

Trudging up hill from Fairleigh I fell in with a man tall, upright, and in full vigour, at sixty-five. He carried a basket of fish, caught in the Medway since three that morning. No one, I afterwards found, could fill a basket quicker than this old angler, and he could do most things well that depended upon skill of eye and hand. This man is a labourer, whose abilities have raised him to the position of a sort of professional man. He can prune a fruit-tree, dress the hops, tally at picking, thatch a stack, make a hurdle, and do whatever rustic labour is the most in demand and the best paid. As his services are

always in demand, he is not bound down to one employer. When the hops are safe in pocket, he forsakes the fields for the garden. His winter master is the owner of a green-house, and for several months Dick is busy with the geraniums and on the lawn among the shrubs. While people of less perception would puzzle over the meaning of botanical terms, he, without knowing the words, has discovered some of the subtleties they express. It was interesting to hear Dick, as we walked on together, describe his experiments in raising new varieties of potatoes, or grafting several varieties of geraniums on one stem. That last is a simple operation to an adroit hand; but there is great wonderment at the Waggon and Team, where neighbours meet to smoke a friendly pipe and settle the hop-crop, when Dick produces his geranium, with scarlet Tom Thumb, white Madam Vaucher, and Rose Superb, all blooming on one stem. The potato seed is sown in his winter master's green-house. The tubers are as big as walnuts by Christmas; these are sown out of doors in the spring, and thus the new variety is obtained and a year saved. Plants renewed by cuttings or grafts—as the vine, apple, or potato—become weak sooner or later. Renewal by seed produces a new individual, with renewed strength; but the cutting, or graft, is only a slice of the old stock. "How's-e'er," says Dick: "you are not going to keep your new sort to yourself in Kent! If anybody has a good thing, it will be sure to spread. It may be in my garden this year, but it will be in everybody's next year. And they are right. A good thing should do good to us all. When the 'golden tipped' hops were first raised, the grower meant to keep them to himself; but a small slip of hop will grow," says Dick, with a wink, "and sure enough, they hops will grow all over the county in a year or two!"

My companion agreed to be my guide through eight or nine miles of orchards and hops, by Cox Heath, over the hill to Hunton, and to Yalding railway station. Presently we met a young woman, his niece, with a letter for the post. This Dick took into his hand to see that all was right, and detecting a flaw, said: "How can Ampstead spell Hampstead?" The maiden departed with strict injunctions to insert a capital H, and a good one. If an intellectual man be one who delights to cultivate his mind, and prefers that to the pleasure of sense, Dick is an intellectual man. His face shows it. The three prominent features, nose, chin, and forehead, are cast in nature's best mould. The Bible and a few other books have formed Dick's sole reading, but it is astonishing how cultivated his mind is. His daily labour, not too severe, has been amidst the works of nature, and an acute and superior mind has found in them materials for observation and reflection. Dick is clear-headed and a fluent talker, expressing himself in forcible language. A jumble of words without meaning could never come from his lips, because he has had to form his own ideas, and, having shaped out his own thoughts it

would be strange if he could not tell us what they are.

We reach Dick's cottage. His "dame" is busy in the garden. He points her out with pride, and describes her as the most industrious of women, and the best of housewives. He was a widower when he married Doll, his present helpmate, twelve years ago. It was at hop-picking time, and she was the best of the pickers. Dick was foreman of the work. It was not the first season he had "minded" her. But this time, when the work was over, Dick minded her in another sense, and asked whether she would return home with the others, or stay in the country with him? So she and her friends came to sup at Dick's house. Dick had boiled a plum-pudding beforehand. Doll cooked the steaks and potatoes, and Doll has cooked Dick's steaks and potatoes ever since. The cottage is his freehold, standing in a bright and cheerful spot, and he says there is not a man in the three kingdoms happier than he is. So he thinks, and so it must be, since "there's nothing good, or bad, but thinking makes it so."

We now reach that part of the road which passes, by a deep cutting, through the crest of the hill; on reaching the spot where the road passes straight down the opposite side of the hill, a beautiful and extensive view of the Weald of Kent comes suddenly upon us. The hill we have just passed consists of the famous Kentish rag, which forms the subsoil of one of the richest tracts in England. There are four soils: the rag, brick-earth, hassock sand, and "red pin," the last an iron earth comparatively poor; the sand is tolerable, but has too much sand and too little of other things in it. But the rag and brick-earth are splendid. The rag is a dark grey sandstone containing clay and (I suppose), the phosphates, silicates, and all other good things. The soil formed from it is never wet, because the fissures in the rock below, allow the water to escape. I passed through a fine hop-garden at Cox Heath, where the ragstones might have been gathered from the surface with a shovel. But usually this soil and the brick-earth are of great depth; there is no fear of breaking the staple; the deeper the soil is ploughed, the deeper and richer the seed-bed will be. But many are the soils—especially chalks, gravels, and poor clays—where the staple must not be broken, and the soil can only be deepened and improved by very slow degrees. It will take two lives and constant manuring to give some soils six inches of depth, and here the same may be got in two years without manure. The rags of Kent mean riches.

Behind a hill, near Battle, I passed under a railway arch and came to a hop-garden, containing what was said to be the finest crop of the year in England. I saw none to compare with it in Kent and Sussex. There were three poles to a hill. The poles bent with the heavy weight of flowers which hung in festoons from pole to pole, and from hill to hill. The tender shoots of bine crossed every path with their fragrant load of hops, so delicate and graceful that the clumsiest rustic passed through

it gently. This hop is the sort called Jones's; and as it grew in a damp bottom with a brook running through it, and an osier bed close by, it had withstood excessive drought. The flower was very large. In the same garden was a piece of that beautiful, late, long, square, four-sided hop, the colgate.

This is the way to estimate a crop. At two yards apart from hill to hill, the number of hills to an acre is one thousand two hundred and ten. A bushel of dried hops, of average quality, weighs a pound and a half. Therefore a bushel to a hill weighs sixteen hundredweight an acre, and this is a great crop, though even this has been greatly exceeded. The average growth of the kingdom between 1840 and 1849 inclusive was six and a half hundredweight to the acre, as appears by the amount of duty paid. The ground covered with hops in England, now sixty-four thousand acres, has increased in quantity by one half in the last ten years. In Kent, the space taken for hops, now forty-one thousand acres, has nearly doubled; in Sussex, it remains at about ten thousand. Meanwhile the duty on importation and the excise duty on English-grown hops have both been repealed, and the growth of hops abroad has been greatly encouraged. In Bavaria, there is a finer climate than in Kent, and a nobler river than the Medway. The plains of the Danube, are perhaps unrivalled for fertility. Kentish labourers were sent out in 1863 to show German farmers the English system of hop cultivation, especially the process of drying and preparing for market. The result is, that some of the best flavoured hops used for our bitter beer, come from Bavaria. France, Germany, Belgium, Poland, and America, compete with the home grower. Hops therefore must find their level in price. They must be cultivated only on the soils best suited for them; and in all probability, the acreage of English hop-grounds, which increased so greatly under the sudden stimulus of the repeal, will be reduced.

Hops were first introduced from Flanders in 1525, and soon afterwards there was a petition to parliament against their use in beer, on the ground that the hop was "a wicked weed that would spoil the taste of the drink, and endanger the people." Our annual consumption is now about five hundred thousand hundredweight a year; and within the next ten years the repeal of the malt tax and the increase of the population will probably double it. Thus, hop-growing has room for expansion; and whatever happens, it must always be a favourite pursuit: interesting as regards the cultivation and the details of management: fascinating because of the speculative nature of the trade. The crop ranges from nothing up to twenty hundredweight per acre, and the price is almost as variable. Nothing per hundredweight may easily be realised, by overstanding the market till the hops become old; for every year they degenerate in quality. The very high prices of former times are hardly likely to return, now that the area of growth is so widened. But the range is still

considerable. In 'sixty-seven the early sellers made ten guineas per hundredweight, but the price rapidly fell to five pounds, and later sales were made at three pounds. Two hundred pounds per acre would be the return from one garden; and over the hedge, or across the river, twenty or twenty-five pounds—less than the cost of cultivation. These contrasts often occur, and constitute the excitement of hopting—but it is a lottery in which the good farmer must win in the end, and in which skill, though it may now and then be baffled, is in the long run well rewarded.

SEALS.

THERE are about thirty species of seals at present known to naturalists; but of these not one half are "fur seals." The "hair seals" are, however, hunted for their blubber and hides, out of which leather is made; they are only found in northern latitudes, while the fur seals are confined to the southern regions and to the North Pacific: no species yielding valuable fur skins being found in the Atlantic, or on the shores of the Northern hemisphere. There are, therefore, a Northern and a Southern seal fishery, so called; but in reality the seal, though living in the sea so far as is necessary to obtain its food, is not a fish, but a warm-blooded suck-giving animal, belonging to the order Pinnipedia, or oar-footed mammals, and passes the greater portion of its time sleeping on the shore or on the ice-fields. The seals also inhabit the southern coasts of Europe and the British islands; but it is only in high northern latitudes, among the ice-fields of Newfoundland, Spitzbergen, and Greenland, that they are found in sufficient quantities to render their pursuit profitable. In the Spitzbergen, or, as it is sometimes erroneously called, the "Greenland seal fishery," the seals which form the quarry of the sealer are chiefly four species—the ground seal; the saddleback, or harp seal, from the saddle or harp-shaped marking on the backs of the adult male; the bladder-nosed seal, or klappmütz of the Continental sealers, so called from the inflated bladder or cap on its forehead; and the floe rat, the smallest species of seal in the Arctic seas. Spring is the time when the pursuit of these seals is followed, because at that time the seals assemble in incredible numbers on the great ice-floes, which have not as yet broken up in the Arctic seas, to produce their young. The young of the seal is generally of a creamy coloured white, and is particularly fat, and his skin, though small, is covered with a thick coating of hair. For fourteen or twenty days after birth they are unable to swim; and it often happens that seals of this age are blown off the floes by the spring gales, and drowned. The sealer, therefore, endeavours to reach the North Sea before they have taken the water; for then the helpless young fall an easy prey to the hunters.

Now-a-days there are few whalers sailing

from British ports, and most of these are steamers belonging to Dundee, Hull, Kirkcaldy, Peterhead, or Aberdeen. Nearly all of these vessels, since the failure of the whale fishery on the east side of Davis Strait (to which inlet whaling is now almost entirely confined), make a preliminary trip to the seal fishery; and those vessels which pursue the Spitzbergen whaling do so as a matter of necessity, because they are unable to penetrate to the more northern haunts of the whale until the ice barrier breaks up later in the season. There are also a number of German, Norwegian, and Dutch ships engaged in the seal fishery; all being comprehended by the non-political British seamen under the generic name of "Dutchmen." The French had at one time a few ships; but of late years they have abandoned the enterprise. The "Dutchmen" sail directly for the "sealing ground;" but the British ships rendezvous towards the end of February and the first days of March, in Bressa Sound, off Lerwick, in Shetland, the most northern town in Her Majesty's dominions. As most of the seamen are drunk before starting, this halt is looked upon as a convenient stoppage to put all in order before encountering the tempestuous North Sea. Here are bought fresh stores of fish, fowls, and eggs at a very low price, vegetables, leather "sealing caps," and the numerous articles of Shetland hosiery, comforters, mits, guernseys, &c. Here also arrive from the Nor' Isles stalwart fellows, with very big sea-chests, and a small stock of clothing, to be taken on as "green hands" to assist in the sealing. They are shrewd lazy customers, little liked by the regular hands, and poorly paid, and kicked about briskly; but they, nevertheless, come in such numbers that there is generally little difficulty for each ship, in ten days or a fortnight, to make up its complement of men to from forty to seventy. Lerwick is then quite alive. It is the annual holiday of the old Scandinavian-looking village, which for the rest of the year stagnates in more than Shetland dullness. The crooked, narrow streets are alive with hundreds of seamen, who are always, more or less, under the influence of rum, though there is not, or was not, at the time of our visit, a single licensed house in the whole village. But the people are hospitable, and half-a-crown will go as far in producing from private stores bottles of ardent spirits, as anywhere else in the world. The boatmen and fishermen seem to keep open house, and vie with each other in showing kindness to and in making a harvest out of the sealers. At last, one by one, cheered in turn by the other vessels of the fleet, and by a demoniacal yell from a crowd of boys, and girls decked with caps and ribbons, at the landings, the vessels sail out of the Sound, and soon lose sight of Shetland. High seas generally prevail in these latitudes so early in the year; but if you are in a steamer it will not last long; in about a week little bits of oozy-looking ice, tossing about on the crests of the waves, will tell that you are approaching the scene of your labours. In a few days more

larger pieces will appear, and shortly afterwards dreary floes will heave in sight to the northward.

The sealer now coasts along these fields of ice, observing the nature of the ice, and whether it is suitable for his purpose, and occasionally consulting with the captains of the other ships regarding their chances of a good cargo. Now and then he will push in among the broken-up floes to test the nature of the ice, or whether any seals are in that direction, and if unsuccessful will push out again, and continue coasting round what he calls the "cant" of the ice. All this time the men are busily getting up the tools. These consist of sealing clubs—a sharp spike at the end of a handle three feet long—long sharp knives for skinning the seals, seal guns suitable for throwing ball, &c. The nights are long and dark at this season of the year, for the bright continual daylight of the Arctic regions has not yet begun to prevail, and snow and sleet are of hourly occurrence. Altogether it is cheerless work when there are no seals. Everybody is muffled from head to foot in the warmest clothing, and a fur cap which only leaves the tip of the nose, the eyes, and the mouth exposed. Hoar frost, and sometimes a miniature crop of icicles hang from the shaggy moustaches of the men as they trot backward and forward on the snow-covered deck to keep their feet warm, or hang dreamily over the side discussing the chances of a long purse versus a short one. For every man on board, from the captain and the surgeon to the cabin boy, is directly interested in the result of the voyage.

"Things look roughish," the old skipper remarks. "For twenty years I haven't seen such a nasty look-out." So he coasts along until he sees an opening wide and clear between the floes, and pushes in. Coming from the open friendless sea, it looks quite homelike among the great floes. The "leads" of open water look like streams meandering through a snow-covered country. A lazy seal, with its young at its side, staring up with great glassy eyes, also takes away from the appearance of utter desolation; and now and then a few seals, attracted by the whistling of the seamen, peep up above the oozy sea to see what is the matter. Darkness is settling down, but the old skipper still pushes on, trusting to the ironshod bows, and doubling and trebling of his ship. At last he finds the ice beginning to form around the vessel, so he anchors on to a floe and waits for morning. Before daylight is well on, the captain is shaken in his bunk by one of the watch to tell him that they think seals are not far off, for though the night is so dark that it is impossible to see ten yards ahead, yet they can hear the cries of seal pups. Morning shows, to the delight of these hardy hunters after pinnipeds, that in the darkness they have run in among a huge herd of seals quietly enjoying the dolce far niente of Arctic life. Not an hour is to be lost, for the ice may shift or a storm arise, and the fortune at their ship's side may be snatched out from before their eyes. From the "crow's nest" a sight may be seen

almost impossible to be described. Far as the eye can reach the spotless purity of the snow is speckled by huge flocks of seals reposing beside their escape holes which communicate with the sea beneath, and at their side are their helpless young. Long lines of hunters are leaving the ship, some armed with rifles, others with the sealing clubs, and other vessels having scented the plunder from afar are hurriedly making fast to the floe, or despatching parties over to the scene. Crack! crack! Every minute the noise rings through the clear Arctic air, telling that an old seal making for the water has been arrested in its career. These are generally the males, for the females will rarely desert their young until the last extremity, and will not unfrequently remain, and in attempting to defend their hapless offspring meet the same fate. As for the young which are unable to escape, a kick of the heavy sea boot or a blow of the sharp-spiked club settles their fate. No sooner is one killed than it is flayed: an operation which does not occupy more than two minutes, if so much. A rapid turn of the sharp sheath knife round the neck, another round each flipper, and a last one down the belly completes the operation; a few touches of the knife serving to take off the "jacket" or skin, to which is attached a layer of three inches or more of blubber, a white fatty substance streaked red with the blood-vessels. A man has rarely to stir over a few feet before he stuns or brains another, and so on he goes until he has collected quite a trophy around him. He now fastens the rope or "rueraddy" with which he is provided, to the skins and blubber, and drags them over the ice to a place where the boats are receiving them and carrying them to the ship. The man returns to his murderous work until he has completed a sufficient number to be again attached to his "rueraddy" and dragged to the boats. On board the ship they are dropped into the hold, a tally being kept of the quantity obtained, for entry in the log-book. Every seal which is dropped into the hold of the ship is something in the pocket of everybody, so that hard as is the work, and cruel the sport, the men go into it with a gusto, all the more vigorous that it is a break in the monotony of a sea voyage. The captain, from the crow's nest on the main royal-mast-head, is not forgetful of his faithful lieges, as is substantially shown by the "tots" of rum, which are now and then served out by the steward on the ice. All day long this work goes on, until, towards evening, a change is seen to have come over the morning purity of the snow. Everywhere the floe is scattered with the bleeding carcasses of seals, and the snow is dyed scarlet in the lines of the slaughtering parties. On the morrow the sealer renews his search, and, if successful, he may fill his vessel in a few days. The business is not, however, without its perils. Sometimes a sudden gale arises, and before the boats can get the men collected together, the floe will break up, and while the ship is driven out to sea, the unfortunate seamen will be left drifting about, exposed to the

storm on the swaying ice-fields; or a man will suddenly plump through a broken place in the ice, and before he can attract the attention of the eager hunters, will be carried away by the current under the floe and lost for ever. Storms will even occasionally destroy the vessel, but these mishaps are rarer here than in Baffin's Bay; and as another ship is usually at hand, there is seldom any loss of life. Frost bites are of daily occurrence, but are nothing compared with the condensed frozen vapour of the sea which pierces the face like a shower of needles. The feeling after being subjected to it for an hour or two is that of being shaved by a ragged razor, hence the seaman terms it "the barber." Again, he may be unlucky enough to get frozen in with his ship, with the seals in sight through the telescope from the mast-head, too far off to be of any use to him. So, Tantalus-like, he sees riches and is unable to grasp them, while the lucky Dutchman, who bears the reputation of being the best sealer in the Greenland sea, is filling his ship. But there is no help for it. So the skipper goes down to take his meridian rum and water—the sun being over the foreyard—growing something about a certain personage taking care of his own, and makes up his mind to meet a cold reception from "his owners," as he relates the tale of his ill-luck. He has another competitor besides the Dutchman: a grim old gentleman in a shaggy white coat. The sailors call him "the farmer;" but he is more widely known as the Polar bear. Seals form the greater portion of the polar bear's food, though he will often clear an islet of eider ducks' eggs in the course of a few hours. Every ice hummock sends forth its bear, and if you are to credit the Esquimaux report, the she bear makes for seals, with her cub hanging about her neck. Hunters will tell you, among other traditions of the sealing craft, how Jim Bilboe or Sandy McWhuddin, a messmate, was flensing a seal in the spring of '47, and felt a rough hand laid on his shoulder, and cried out—"What the Something do you want? None of your skylarking!" but getting no response, looked up, and was astonished to find a huge white bear with its paw on his shoulder, inquiring, in its own way, why he trespassed on his northern domains? Then, again, you will be told how Jan van der Drunk, "skipper of a Dutchman," was walking along the ice one afternoon, thinking of the Zuyder Zee, when he became suddenly conscious of being steadily accompanied, cheek by jowl, by a bear. As Captain Jan halted so did Bruin, and as the skipper walked so did the bear, until Jan's men relieved him by a sortie from the ship.

The seal itself is generally harmless enough; but it will sometimes endanger the sealer's peace of mind and "continuity of tissue." The bladder-nose will boldly meet his opponent, and even the quiet sober saddle-back, in the fury of maternal affection, will sometimes, when the sealer is flaying its pup, stretch her head out of the water and seize him by

the calf of the leg, inflicting with its powerful tusks very severe wounds.

A score of such yarns, you will hear while the good ship, Spoutin' Whale, is filling up with seals in the "Greenland Sea of the Dutch," as Mr. Norrie's old chart, which hangs up in the cabin, styles it. This is about the end of April, and now the great fields of ice are broken into fragments, and the carcasses of the seals covering it are either left to the polar bear or sunk to the bottom of the sea, where they must now, with those of whales, form such a bed, that I would like to hear the theory which geologists (say a couple of million years or so hence) will form regarding this "deposit," when the bed of the Spitzbergen sea forms fields of yellow grain, and England perhaps is a tropical forest!

The sealers care nothing for the flesh, though the livers are sometimes eaten. The Esquimaux, however, look upon the flesh in quite a different light, and, indeed, when cooked it is far from contemptible as the *pièce de resistance* of an Arctic dinner, and very much superior to a burgomaster gull. The sealer, however, thinks it is unwholesome, for now and then he sees the young affected by a disease not unlike scrofula: an inflammation of the glands of the neck: and curiously enough this goitre-like disease induces dwarfishness in the seals, as it does in the Cretins of the Alps and elsewhere. Some of the sealers, if they intend to pursue the Spitzbergen whaling in the ensuing summer, follow the flocks of seals, which have now taken to the water, northward, and in the month of May often fall in with considerable numbers. This is called the "old sealing," but as the seals are apt to sink when shot late in the year, though early in the spring they are so fat as to float, this kind of business is not popular with the sealers, and most of them return home, to deposit their cargo, and to refit for the "Straits fishing" in Davis Strait and Baffin's Bay. As they steam gaily southward, the men get up the seals and pare the layer of blubber off the skins. If the voyage is likely to be a long or a warm one, a little salt is sometimes thrown over the skins, but generally the weather is cold enough for their preservation in perfectly good condition until they are unshipped. The old skipper is in high trim at his success, and over his evening grog tells all sorts of traditions of the trade. For instance, he relates how in the year '11, when he was 'prentice on board the Nancy Dawson, a square old bluff-bowed snuff-box of a Hull whaler, we were at war with France, and French cruisers liked nothing better than to take a run up in the North Sea and cut out an old whaler. There wasn't much in her, no doubt, but still she was a prize, and if nothing better she made a good blaze when burnt. They didn't dare, however, to venture in among the ice, as their vessels were not fortified for such work, and accordingly, when one summer day the Nancy Dawson had just unhooked from the floe, and a French man-o'-war bore down upon her, she ran immediately in among the ice,

where pursuit was out of the question. There she remained until the Frenchman was out of sight, but the whaler hadn't well got out before the cruiser heaved in sight again, but with the same result, her intended victim running in among the ice. In those days a convoy used to accompany the whalers north, but the skipper of the Nancy Dawson was of an independent turn of mind, and not believing much in the judgment of the whaler's admiral, he used to go off where he chose, and run his risk, and now he was running it with a vengeance. It seemed as if the Frenchman would cage him. At last she cleared off for good, as he thought, and after remaining for more than a week among the ice, a ship heaving in sight made all sail towards the Nancy Dawson to hear the news. The vessel certainly looked like a whaler. There was her "crow's nest," there were her guys, there was her—but stop! the old skipper was at the mast-head, shouting in a voice of thunder, "Port your helm there! It's the Frenchman again! He's got his blocks hoisted the wrong way. 'Bout ship!" so back to the ice they steered. The cruiser's disguise was not complete. In his attempt to imitate a whaler, he had erred in a few technical points, and finding his victim was not to be entrapped, he steered off for a more promising chase. Then he tells of the old sealer who was chased by a French sloop of war, off Shetland, and how they kept up a running chase. First the whaler fired all his ball, then he fired broken harpoons, then half cheeses, until at last, in despair, he fired the poker and tongs, cutting through the Frenchman's rigging. He could hear the men on board the cruiser shouting, "he has chain shot on board!" and the cruiser dropped pursuit. In those days nearly all the better class of whalers were fitted out as privateers or letters of marque, and the skipper tells, with many sage nods, how it is generally supposed that a certain wealthy family of whaling owners made their money more by the capture of a French merchantman, which was driven by storms into their course to Davis Strait one summer's day, than by their legitimate trade. The whalers in those times had another enemy to dread nearer home, and that was our war vessels. These men-o'-war used to lie in the Pentland Frith and off the Shetlands, watching for the return of the whalers, when they would press every man on board except the apprentices and the officers, who were exempt. Knowing this, when they arrived off the coast, the men liable to be pressed would take the boats and work their way secretly down the coast, sleeping in quiet coves or secreted by the fishing folk during the day, and rowing by night, until they arrived home, when they would conceal themselves until their vessel was ready to sail again. In the meantime their ship would be brought into port by the apprentices and officers.

All this time we steam south with our cargo, past the dreary island of Jan Mayen, with its now extinct volcano, and near Iceland, until we can see the north isles of Shetland, like

clouds on the horizon. At Lerwick we present the collector with a bottle of frozen beer, and discharge our Shetland men, towards whom Her Majesty's officials have a kindly feeling, and whom they do not search over strictly. These islemen have a knack, when on board a sealer, of living on oatmeal almost entirely (as they have, the run of it), and saving their provisions for winter use. Even the medicines are not safe. The doctor will tell you that when he gives them a dose he makes them swallow it before him, otherwise they will save it for winter use, supposing that all medicine is equally the same for all diseases. The ribbon-capped damsels at the landing give a cheer, and we steam south for Dundee. Here the cargo is discharged, more coal and more provision are taken in, and by the beginning of May the vessel is off to the Davis Strait whaling.

We have only spoken of the Spitzbergen sealing: but there are many more seals got. The Russians kill many in the White Sea; and the Esquimaux, on the shores of Davis, kill numbers during the whole year on the ice and in their little "Kayaks." From Danish Greenland alone there are exported every year from forty to fifty thousand seal skins, besides blubber. The Newfoundland and Labrador seal fishery will yield as many as the Spitzbergen. Up to April, last year, two hundred and fifty thousand seals had been brought by the Newfoundland sealers into St. John's and Harbour Grace alone. All of these seals are "hair seals," and their skins are only used for leather, of which an excellent description is manufactured. The blubber yields a good quality of oil, each ton being worth on an average forty pounds: while the skins are worth, take one with another, five shillings apiece, in the European market, so that it may be considered that the European (i.e. Spitzbergen and White Sea) and American Arctic (Greenland and Newfoundland) seal fishery cannot be worth much less than three hundred thousand pounds sterling annually. The fine fur seals come, as has been already said, mostly from the South Seas and the North Pacific; but in both regions, the former especially, they are getting rapidly exterminated.

NO WORK TO DO.

A NEW SONG TO A VERY OLD TUNE.

WE'RE a set of knaves and lazy loons,
Who'd rather beg than toil,
And rather steal than either, my boys,
If we saw the chance of spoil.
Hard work's a curse and a punishment
We've heard the parson say,
And we won't be cursed, if we can help,
Neither by night nor day.
'Tis money we seek, 'tis money we'll have,
If we howl till all is blue;
Money for baccy, and money for gin;
WE DON'T want work to do.

Six hours of shouting in the streets
Is jolly good fun, and free,
And brings more shillings than ten hours' work;
Such fools the people be!

The girls and women think of our wives,
 The men dislike our bray,
 And throw us pence for lack of sense,
 If we'll only go away.
 'Tis money we seek, 'tis money we'll have,
 If we howl till all is blue;
 Money for 'baccy, and money for gin;
 We don't want work to do.

Success to gammon and false pretence,
 Success to the Barley Mow,
 And may never the world be less of an ass
 Than we all of us find it now!
 'Tis well to work if there's no escape,
 'Tis better to cadge and crawl;
 So throw us the coppers as fast as you can,
 Good people, one and all!
 For 'tis money we seek, 'tis money we'll have,
 If we howl till all is blue;
 Money for baccy, and money for gin;
 We don't want work to do.

APPARENT DEATH.

VERY lately, the present writer was requested to attend, on a Monday morning, the funeral of a lady sixty-seven years of age, the wife of the mayor of a small French town, who had died in the night between the Thursday and the Friday previous. On the company assembling, the curé informed us that the body would remain where it was for awhile, but that the usual ceremonies (except those at the cemetery) would be proceeded with all the same. We therefore followed him to the church, and had a funeral service without a burial. It transpired that the body was still quite warm, and presented no signs of decomposition.

In the ordinary course of things, this circumstance might not have prevented the interment; but the poor lady herself had requested not to be buried until decomposition should have begun beyond the possibility of mistake; and the family remembered, and regretted, that her brother had been put into the ground, three days after his death, while still warm, and with his countenance unchanged. They had occasionally felt uneasy about the matter, fearing that they *might* have been too precipitate in their proceedings. So in this case they resolved to take no irrevocable step without the full assurance of being justified in doing so. The corpse was kept uninterred long after every doubt was set at rest. Certainly we manage *some* things better in England than in France; amongst them being the interval allowed to elapse between death and interment. Still, there are circumstances and cases which, even here, afford matter for serious reflection.

It will easily be supposed that the dan-

gerous briefness of this interval has been urged upon the attention of the French Legislature, and been ably discussed by the French medical press. In 1866, a petition was presented to the Senate from a person named De Cornol, pointing out the danger of hasty interments, and suggesting the measures he thought requisite to avoid terrible consequences. Amongst other things, he prayed that the space of twenty-four hours between the decease and the interment now prescribed by the law should be extended to eight-and-forty hours. A long debate followed, in which Cardinal Donnet, Archbishop of Bordeaux, took a leading part. He was decidedly of opinion that the petition should *not* be set aside by the "order of the day," but that it should be transmitted to the minister of the interior for further consideration and inquiry. Some of the venerable prelate's remarks produced so great an effect on his auditors as to merit particular mention. He said he had the very best reasons for believing that the victims of hasty interments were more numerous than people supposed. He considered the regulations on this head prescribed by the law as very judicious, but unfortunately they were not always executed as they should be, nor was sufficient importance attached to them. In the village where he was stationed as assistant curate in the first period of his sacerdotal life, he saved two persons from being buried alive. The first was an aged man, who lived twelve hours after the hour fixed for his interment by the municipal officer. The second was a man who was quite restored to life. In both these instances a trance more prolonged than usual was taken for actual death.

The next case in his experience occurred at Bordeaux. A young lady, who bore one of the most distinguished names in the department, had passed through what was believed to be her last agony, and as, apparently, all was over, the father and mother were torn away from the heart-rending spectacle. At that moment, as God willed it, the cardinal happened to pass the door of the house, when it occurred to him to call and inquire how the young lady was going on. When he entered the room, the nurse, finding the body breathless, was in the act of covering the face, and indeed there was every appearance that life had departed. Somehow or other, it did not seem so certain to him as to the bystanders. He resolved to try. He raised his voice, called loudly upon the young

lady not to give up all hope, said that he was come to cure her, and that he was about to pray by her side. "You do not see me," he said, "but you hear what I am saying." Those singular presentiments were not unfounded. The words of hope reached her ear and effected a marvellous change, or rather called back the life that was departing. The young girl survived, and in 1866 was a wife, the mother of children, and the chief happiness of two most respectable families.

The last instance related by the archbishop is so interesting, and made such a sensation, that it deserves to be given in his own words.

"In the summer of 1826, on a close and sultry day, in a church that was excessively crowded, a young priest who was in the act of preaching was suddenly seized with giddiness in the pulpit. The words he was uttering became indistinct; he soon lost the power of speech, and sank down upon the floor. He was taken out of the church, and carried home. Everybody thought that all was over. Some hours afterwards, the funeral bell was tolled, and the usual preparations were made for the interment. His eyesight was gone; but if, like the young lady I have mentioned, he could see nothing, he could nevertheless hear; and I need not say that what reached his ears was not calculated to reassure him. The doctor came, examined him, and pronounced him dead; and after the usual inquiries as to his age, the place of his birth, &c., gave permission for his interment next morning. The venerable bishop, in whose cathedral the young priest was preaching when he was seized with the fit, came to his bedside to recite the *De Profundis*. The body was measured for the coffin. Night came on, and you will easily feel how inexpressible was the anguish of the living being in such a situation. At last, amid the voices murmuring around him, he distinguished that of one whom he had known from infancy. That voice produced a marvellous effect, and excited him to make a superhuman effort. Of what followed I need say no more than that the seemingly dead man stood next day in the pulpit, from which he had been taken for dead. That young priest, gentlemen, is the same man who is now speaking before you, and who, more than forty years after that event, implores those in authority not merely to watch vigilantly over the careful execution of the legal prescriptions with regard to interments, but to enact fresh ones, in order to

prevent the recurrence of irreparable misfortunes."

A remarkable pamphlet, *Lettre sur La Mort Apparente, Les Conséquences Réelles des Inhumations Précipitées, et Le Temps Pendant lequel peut persister L'Aptitude à être Rappelé à la Vie*,* by the late regretted Dr. Charles Londe, records accidents which are more likely than the preceding to occur in England. Even were the bathing season not at hand, deaths by drowning are always to be apprehended. We therefore cite the following:

On the 13th of July, 1829, about two o'clock in the afternoon, near the Pont des Arts, Paris, a body, which appeared lifeless, was taken out of the river. It was that of a young man, twenty years of age, dark-complexioned, and strongly built. The corpse was discoloured and cold; the face and lips were swollen and tinged with blue; a thick and yellowish froth exuded from the mouth; the eyes were open, fixed, and motionless; the limbs limp and drooping. *No pulsation of the heart nor trace of respiration was perceptible.* The body had remained under water for a considerable time; the search after it, made in Dr. Bourgeois's presence, lasted fully twenty minutes. That gentleman did not hesitate to incur the derision of the lookers-on, by proceeding to attempt the resurrection of what, in their eyes, was a mere lump of clay. Nevertheless, several hours afterwards, the supposed corpse was restored to life, thanks to the obstinate perseverance of the doctor, who, although strong and enjoying robust health, was several times on the point of losing courage, and abandoning the patient in despair.

But what would have happened if Dr. Bourgeois, instead of persistently remaining stooping over the inanimate body, with watchful eye and attentive ear, to catch the first rustling of the heart, had left the drowned man, after half-an-hour's fruitless endeavour, as often happens? The unfortunate young man would have been laid in the grave, *although capable of restoration to life!* To this case, Dr. Bourgeois, in the *Archives de Médecine*, adds others, in which individuals who had remained under water as long as SIX HOURS were recalled to life by efforts which a weaker conviction than his own would have refrained from making. These facts lead Dr. Londe to the conclusion that, *every day, drowned individuals*

* Paris, chez J. B. Baillière, Libraire de l'Académie Impériale de Médecine.

are buried, who, with greater perseverance, might be restored to life.

Nor is suffocation by foul air and mephitical gas, a rare form of death in the United Kingdom. It is possible that suspended animation may now and then have been mistaken for the absolute extinction of life. Dr. Londe gives an instructive case to the purpose. At the extremity of a large grocer's shop, a close narrow corner, or rather hole, was the sleeping-place of the shopman who managed the night sale till the shop was closed, and who opened the shutters at four in the morning. On the 16th of January, 1825, there were loud knocks at the grocer's door. As nobody stirred to open it, the grocer rose himself, grumbling at the shopman's laziness, and proceeding to his sleeping-hole to scold him. He found him motionless in bed, completely deprived of consciousness. Terror-struck by the idea of sudden death, he immediately sent in search of a doctor, who suspected a case of asphyxia by mephitism. His suspicions were confirmed by the sight of a night-lamp, which had gone out although well supplied with oil and wick; and by a portable stove containing the remains of charcoal partly reduced to ashes.

In spite of a severe frost, he immediately had the patient taken into the open air, and kept on a chair in a position as nearly vertical as possible. The limbs of the sufferer hung loose and drooping, the pupils were motionless, with no trace either of breathing or pulsation of the heart or arteries; in short, there were all the signs of death. The most approved modes of restoring animation were persisted in for a long while, without success. At last, about three in the afternoon, that is after *eleven hours'* continued exertion, a slight movement was heard in the region of the heart. A few hours afterwards, the patient opened his eyes, regained consciousness, and was able to converse with the spectators attracted by his resurrection. Dr. Londe draws the same conclusions as before; namely, that persons suffocated by mephitism, are not unfrequently buried, when they might be saved.

We have had cholera in Great Britain, and may have it again. At such trying times, if ever, hurried interments are not merely excusable, but almost unavoidable. Nevertheless, one of the peculiarities of that fearful disease is to bring on some of the symptoms of death, the prostration, the coldness, and the dull livid hues, long

before life has taken its departure. Now, Dr. Londe states, as an acknowledged fact, that patients, pronounced dead of cholera, have been repeatedly seen to move one or more of their limbs after death. While M. Trachez (who had been sent to Poland to study the cholera) was opening a subject in the deadhouse of the Bagatelle Hospital in Warsaw, he saw another body (that of a woman of fifty, who had died in two days, having her eyes still bright, her joints supple, but the whole surface extremely cold), which visibly moved its left foot ten or twelve times in the course of an hour. Afterwards, the right foot participated in the same movement, but very feebly. M. Trachez sent for Mr. Searle, an English surgeon, to direct his attention to the phenomenon. Mr. Searle *had often remarked it*. The woman, nevertheless, was left in the dissecting-room, and thence taken to the cemetery. Several other medical men stated that they had made similar observations. From which M. Trachez draws the inference: "It is allowable to think that many cholera patients have been buried alive."

Dr. Veyrat, attached to the Bath Establishment, Aix, Savoy, was sent for to La Roche (Department of the Yonne), to visit a cholera patient, Thérèse X., who had lost all the members of her family by the same disease. He found her in a complete state of asphyxia. He opened a vein; not a drop of blood flowed. He applied leeches; they bit, and immediately loosed their hold. He covered the body with stimulant applications, and went to take a little rest, requesting to be called if the patient manifested any signs of life. The night and next day passed without any change. While making preparations for the burial, they noticed a little blood oozing out of the leech-bites. Dr. Veyrat, informed of the circumstance, entered the chamber, just as the nurse was about to wrap the corpse in its winding-sheet. Suddenly a rattling noise issued from Thérèse's chest. She opened her eyes, and in a hollow voice said to the nurse: "What are you doing here? I am not dead. Get away with you." She recovered, and felt no other inconvenience than a deafness, which lasted about two months.

Exposure to cold may also induce a suspension of vitality, liable to be mistaken for actual death. This year, the French senate has again received several petitions relative to premature interments. The question is serious in a country where custom (to say nothing of law) rules that burials shall take place within

eight-and-forty, seventy-two, or at most ninety-six hours after death. And, considering the length of time that trances, catalepsies, lethargies, and cases of suspended animation have been known occasionally to continue, it is scarcely in England less interesting to us, though public feeling, which is only an expression of natural affection, approves, and indeed almost compels, a longer delay. The attention of the French government being once more directed to the subject, there is little doubt that all reasonable grounds for fear will be removed.

The petitioners have requested, as a precaution, that all burials, for the future, should, in the first instance, be only provisional. Before filling a grave, a communication is to be made between the coffin and the upper atmosphere, by means of a respiratory tube; and the grave is not to be finally closed until all hope of life is abandoned. These precautions, it will be seen at once, however good in theory, are scarcely practicable. Others have demanded the general establishment of mortuary chambers, or dead-houses, like those in Germany. And not only the petitioners, but several senators, seem to consider that measure the full solution of the problem. Article 77 of the Civil Code prescribes a delay of twenty-four hours only; which appears to them to be insufficient. Science, they urge, admits the certainty that death has taken place, only after putrefactive decomposition has set in. Now, a much longer time than twenty-four hours may elapse before that decomposition manifests itself. Deposit, therefore, your dead in a mortuary chapel until you are perfectly sure, from the evidence of your senses, that life is utterly and hopelessly extinct.

In Germany, coffins, with the corpses laid out in them, are placed in a building where a keeper watches day and night. During the forty years that this system has been in force, not a single case of apparent death has been proved to occur. This negative result cannot be cited as conclusive, either for or against the system. In a country where a million of people annually die, an experiment embracing only forty-six thousand corpses, is too partial to be relied on as evidence. Moreover, mortuary chambers exist only in a few great centres of population; and it is especially in small towns and country districts, where medical men are too busy to inspect the dead, that premature interments are to be apprehended.

Out of Germany, as in England and France, there might be a great difficulty in getting the population to accept and make use of mortuary chambers. And even if favourably looked upon in large cities, the rich, as in Germany, would refuse to expose their dead there to the public gaze. In the country and in isolated villages the plan would be impossible to carry out. M. Henri de Parville, while announcing the existence of an infallible test for distinguishing apparent from real death, protests that to wait until a body falls into decomposition, is just as opposed to French habits, to hygiene, and to the public health, as mortuary chambers are unacceptable by the public in general. He holds that the legislature has already adopted the wiser and more practical measure. The permission to inter a corpse cannot be granted until the civil officer has gone to see the body of the deceased. When the Article 77 of the Civil Code was under discussion by the Council of State, Fourcroy added: "It shall be specified that the civil officer be assisted by an officer de santé—a medical man of inferior rank to a doctor of medicine—because there are cases in which it is difficult to make certain that death has actually occurred, without a thorough knowledge of its symptoms, and because there are tolerably numerous examples to prove that people *have* been buried alive." In Paris, especially since Baron Haussmann's administration, Article 77 has been strictly fulfilled; but the same exactitude cannot be expected in out-of-the-way nooks and corners of the country, where a doctor cannot always be found, at a minute's warning, to declare whether death be real or apparent only. It is clear that the legislature has hit upon the sole indisputable practical solution; the difficulty lies in its rigorous and efficient application.

It has been judiciously remarked that it would be a good plan to spread the knowledge of the sure and certain characteristics which enable us to distinguish every form of lethargy from real death. It cannot be denied that, at the present epoch, the utmost pains are taken to popularise every kind of knowledge. Nevertheless, it makes slow way through the jungles of prejudice and vulgar error. Not long ago, it was over and over again asserted that an infallible mode of ascertaining whether a person were dead or not, was to inflict a burn on the sole of the foot. If a blister full of water resulted, the individual was not dead; if the contrary happened, there was no further

hope. This error was unhesitatingly accepted as an item of the popular creed.

The Council of Hygiène, applied to by the government, indicated putrefaction and cadaverous rigidity as infallible signs of actual death. In respect to the first, putrefaction, a professional man is not likely to make a mistake; but nothing is more possible than for non-professionals to confound hospital rottenness, gangrene, with true post-mortem putrefaction. M. de Parville declines to admit it as a test adapted for popular application. Moreover, in winter, the time required for putrefaction to manifest itself is extremely uncertain.

The cadaverous rigidity, the stiffness of a corpse, offers an excellent mode of verifying death; but its value and importance are not yet appreciable by everybody, or by the first comer. Cadaverous rigidity occurs a few hours after death; the limbs, hitherto supple, stiffen; and it requires a certain effort to make them bend. But when once the faculty of bending a joint is forcibly restored—to the arm, for instance—it will not stiffen again, but will retain its suppleness. If the death be real, the rigidity is overcome once for all. But if the death be only apparent, the limbs quickly resume, with a sudden and jerking movement, the contracted position which they previously occupied. The stiffness begins at the top, the head and neck, and descends gradually to the trunk.

These characteristics are very clearly marked; but they must be caught in the fact, and at the moment of their appearance: because, after a time, of variable duration, they disappear. The contraction of the members no longer exists, and the suppleness of the joints returns. Many other symptoms might be added to the above; but they demand still greater clearness of perception, more extended professional knowledge, and more practised habits of observation.

Although the French Government is anxious to enforce throughout the whole Empire, the rules carried out in Paris, it is to be feared that great difficulties lie in the way. The verification of deaths on so enormous a scale, with strict minuteness, is almost impracticable. But even if it were not, many timid persons would say: "Who is to assure us of the correctness of the doctors' observations? Unfortunately, too many terrible examples of their fallibility are on record. The professional man is pressed for time. He pays a passing visit, gives a hurried glance; and a fatal

mistake is so easily made!" Public opinion will not be reassured until you can show, every time a death occurs, an irrefutable demonstration that life has departed.

M. de Parville now announces the possibility of this great desideratum. He professes to place in any one's hands, a self-acting apparatus, which would declare, not only whether the death be real, but *would leave in the hands of the experimenter a written proof of the reality of the death.* The scheme is this: It is well known that atrophine—the active principle of belladonna—possesses the property of considerably dilating the pupil of the eye. Oculists constantly make use of it, when they want to perform an operation, or to examine the interior of the eye. Now, M. le Docteur Bouchut has shown that atrophine has no action on the pupil when death is real. In a state of lethargy, the pupil, under the influence of a few drops of atrophine, dilates in the course of a few minutes; the dilatation also takes place a few instants after death; but it ceases absolutely in a quarter of an hour, or half an hour at the very longest; consequently, the enlargement of the pupil is a certain sign that death is only apparent.

This premised, imagine a little camera-obscura, scarcely so big as an opera-glass, containing a slip of photographic paper, which is kept unrolling for five-and-twenty or thirty minutes by means of clockwork. This apparatus, placed a short distance in front of the dead person's eye, will depict on the paper the pupil of the eye, which will have been previously moistened with a few drops of atrophine. It is evident that, as the paper slides before the eye of the corpse, if the pupil dilate, its photographic image will be dilated; if, on the contrary, it remains unchanged, the image will retain its original size. An inspection of the paper then enables the experimenter to read upon it whether the death is real or apparent only. This sort of declaration can be handed to the civil officer, who will give a permit to bury, in return.

By this simple method a hasty or careless certificate of death becomes impossible. The instrument applies the test, and counts the minutes. The doctor and the civil officer are relieved from further responsibility. The paper gives evidence that the verification has actually and carefully been made; for, suppose that half an hour is required to produce a test that can be relied on, the length of the strip of paper unrolled, marks the time during which the experi-

ment has been continued. An apparatus of the kind might be placed in the hands of the minister or one of the notables of every parish. Such a system would silence the apprehensions of the most timid. Fears—natural enough—would disappear, and the world would be shocked by no fresh cases of premature burial.

A SLIPPER DAY.

It must be a happy, comfortable house. It must be away from the town, but not too far for the arrival of pleasant news from the world without. A garden is indispensable. A yard where there are fowls. A couple of pigs, whose hams are destined to glorify the ample kitchen. At hand, a green-house, graced by a noble vine. A sunny fruit wall, where perfect peaches are kissed. A fair, not over spacious, meadow, with a meek-eyed cow to meet one at the gate, and scent the air with milky vapour. A handsome garden, rich in varieties of background shrubbery for the flowers: with a kitchen garden beyond, in which there must be sly corners of pet fruit-bushes.

This, my scene. In it, I have for this day made up my mind to do nothing. I will neither sow nor reap. The idle hands now lifting my dressing-room window to admit the flower-scented morning air, shall, when the sun goes down, be guiltless of work to-day. I shall not want the morning paper, except for a glance at the births, marriages, and deaths, with my cigarette after breakfast. A cold bath at seven refreshes me, for the enjoyment of idleness; a cold bath and a lazy toilette. I am perfectly indifferent as to time. My spaniel whines about my feet, hinting that the hour for a more intimate acquaintance with bacon has come; but to-day bacon and eggs, and sardines, and brawn, must wait my good pleasure. I survey the remote mystery of my wardrobe's treasures. I discover waistcoats and kerchiefs that had passed out of my memory. Why do I never wear that blue cravat my wife's aunt gave me? Graceless fellow that I am, the breast-pin my mother-in-law bestowed upon me, has not sparkled from my bosom twice this year. I linger over the parting of my hair. Bless me, how the grey is gaining upon my locks apace! My wife will be pronouncing a blessing on my frosty pate, as that of her John Anderson. The clematis nods in at the window: a bee settles upon the honey-soap, and flies off in a passion. A head shaking a rare tangle of golden curls is pushed into the room—a head I saw pillowed asleep, an hour ago. Will I never come down to breakfast? I beg to remind my dear that I am master of my time. I have no train to catch, no post to make up, no appointments to keep, nothing to do. An arm is twined within mine, a little hand is thrust through my over-brushed hair (I had contrived to cover the snowy skein), and I am drawn down-stairs.

While tea and coffee are brewing, or while I choose to pretend they are brewing, I escape into the garden, followed by Boswell, my spaniel. I make for my favourite fruit corner, dallying with the flowers, and drawing in plentiful oxygen by the way. Boswell is master of my manly mind, as I am of his canine person. He knows whither my idle steps will tend. Therefore, being a dog with a taste for prospecting among gooseberry bushes, he gravely precedes me; and we are presently both found, and pronounced pigs, by the saucy owner of that same pretty head of curls which flashed upon my dressing-room just now. A saunter back to the breakfast-parlour, broken by a gossip with the gardener about the untoward season which will not exactly adapt itself to the growth of my vegetable-marrows for the exact moment I want them.

A happy family looks best at breakfast, and breakfast is at its best in summer time: albeit Leigh Hunt—a notable authority on domestic graces and celebrations—says: "One of the first things that belong to a breakfast is a good fire. There is a delightful mixture of the lively and snug in coming down into one's breakfast-room of a cold morning, and finding everything prepared for us; a blazing grate, clean table-cloth, and tea-things, newly-washed faces and combed heads of a set of good-humoured urchins, and the sole empty chair ready for its occupant." I grant the tea, the coffee, the dry toast, the butter, the eggs, the ham, something potted, the bread, the salt, the mustard, the knives, the forks; but I will not give up the summer time, the dishes of fruit, the fresh-cut flowers, the lilac of May, and the roses of June. Breakfast, I maintain, is at its sweetest and best when the lark, having built its nest in the corn, is singing over the ripening harvest. I can part with the fire, in favour of the fruit and flowers, the open window, and the insects murmuring by the petals of the floral riches we have brought forth from the hothouse. I concede the washed faces and combed heads—in moderation as to numbers; and I am particular as to the heads being only a trifle higher than the table. A little sprightly miss is bearable at the breakfast hour; but no romp, nor clatter of tongues, no confusion in the number to be helped. So easily contented am I, that I can bear an idle breakfast, with only those golden curls opposite me, and one silvery voice to read me gossip from the crisp paper.

I like to be startled from the table with a "Gracious me, dear, it's eleven o'clock!" and a pretty dash at the key-basket. I survey the crimson which has been lovingly added to the gay macaw of my slippers; pondering the power the gentle worker has over me, and twisting my cigarette, with which I am to be dismissed back to the garden. The mere sense of existence is enough for me now. I keep in the shade of the lime or elm; but mostly in that of the lime, the blossoms of which mingle their perfume with my tiny blue veins of smoke. I beg to observe that I do not read,

and that I never admit within my slipper day the smallest intention of reading. My castle of indolence owes nothing to the printer. No Spanish church door can show a lazier biped than I am, advisedly, on a slipper day. I am laid up in ordinary. I lounge from the bench under the lime, to the lawn. The gardener, who is cutting the grass under the burning sun, imagines I am boring myself horribly, because I set leaves floating upon the fish-pond, and lie watching the tiny eddies which master them, and am next engrossed with the flittings of a dragon-fly. His pitying eye is upon me while I lift the lilies and gaze into their yellow cups, and drop them again, leaving the bees free access. I can count the peaches ripening upon the red wall. The tomatoes at the wall's base remind me of something I have to say to Mrs. Goldencurls about dinner—at lunch time will do.

I have resources enough left. I am keeping back the poultry-yard. I haven't seen the cucumbers. The plants I saw potted out, are awaiting my visit. How much milk has the cow been yielding? Gossip with the groom. Mrs. Goldencurls has not made her appearance yet, in her round gipsy hat, to the utter confusion of the gardener, who, I am sure, would be grateful to her if she would speak to him in a severer voice. The morning flies away. I am dozing in the acacia bower, and am restless in my half-sleep, with flies tickling my cheeks and temples. A silvery little laugh awakes me, and I catch a certain lady, with a guilty feather in her hand, who has been enacting the part of fly. I am good enough to be sportively angry: and to protest that her ladyship may eat luncheon alone. Hereupon, Mrs. Goldencurls acts the commanding queen; stamps the impossible little feet that, cased in bronze slippers, look like June flies; and beckoning with the feather, commands her slave to follow. Who follows.

Fruit for luncheon, and plenty of it; the cake Mrs. Goldencurls has made; the dainty sandwiches she has cut; the little cider-cup she has made, just enough for two, with her lips put to it now and then for sweetening. It may by this time appear to the reader that the slipper day of which I am now noting a few of the salient points, belongs essentially to the opening days of married life: to the sweet time when the bride is settling into the wife, and has just ceased to cry on her lord's departure to business in the morning. Well, a slipper day is most enjoyable in this May-time of connubial life; but the slippers need not be thrown away when the wedding-gown has been cut up for the children. I have two little heads of golden curls, and I am not by any means inclined to throw my slippers away, and forswear an idle day henceforth. I still find myself pressed to give up "the nasty city" for an extra four-and-twenty hours; and the reader has been confidentially admitted to perceive that Mrs. Goldencurls is playful enough to wake me with a feather in the acacia arbour. Likewise, she picks my strawberries, and sprinkles

them with sugar, and opens the ball by tasting them for me: taking care still (as her wont was when we were a bridal pair in the Isle of Wight), to pop the first into my mouth, with her own fingers.

I am good enough to listen, over luncheon, to the lighter stories of domestic management; or to the gossip from the near township. Mrs. Cousens came down yesterday for the first time. Ralph's good-for-nothing son, who opened his career of infamy by breaking the doctor's bell, has just come back from the Cape, and not in the least improved. Mr. Silenus was seen driving home, tipsy again, last night. Some night Mr. S. will break his neck. There is no more beer in the house. The luncheon, seasoned with this light discourse, which I like, as tending to carry a man away from his own selfish matters, is got through. I run my eye vacantly, musingly, along the backs of the books in the library. I muster the energy on occasions, to pull down a volume, but I never go beyond the title-page before I put it back again. My wife tells me it is more than my place is worth, to lay a finger on the plants; although when I return home very tired from the city, and the gardener has neglected his duties (being much of Mr. Silenus's way of thinking), I am not refused the privilege of watering the garden.

The afternoon slips away. Slipping away is the feeling proper to a slipper day. I have left my watch hanging in my dressing-room. O yes, I dare say! I am allowed in the kitchen to day, but sometimes I am chased out of it—when I am not wanted to plant my heavy forefinger upon the string, in order that Mrs. Goldencurls may tie down the jelly tight. I have been made useful in the shelling of peas before now, but have ever protested, as I protest now, that the dignity of manhood does not appear impressively in the process.

Getting through the afternoon! I shall be left, at the end of the day, wondering how the time managed to escape, even without croquet or bowls. I return to observe whether the big fish I saw under the water-lilies is still lazily balancing himself there, until the gloaming shall usher him to his feast of flies. Boswell, diving for pebbles, is diverting for half an hour. I compare my knowledge of the notes of birds with that of the gardener. The swallows whirl under my eaves, and I gaze pensively at them; then the odours of coming dinner steal through the kitchen windows into the stable-yard, where I deprecate the waste of corn and hay with Reuben the groom, who is quite certain that no horse was ever kept in prime condition so cheaply as mine.

Henceforth my idle day is filled, for Mrs. Goldencurls is always quoting Lady Mary Wortley Montague: "The most trivial concerns of economy become noble and elegant when exalted by sentiments of affection; to prepare a meal is not merely giving orders to my cook; it is an amusement to regale the object I dote on." Hearing my voice in the stable-yard, her golden head appears at the kitchen window, and a tomato is held up, in

token of the obedience which is paying to my hint at the luncheon table. A tomato consigned to the stewpan by the beloved hand! A cigarette; Boswell by my side; the shady side of the garden; forty winks; and a light waking dream. The shadows of the elms stretch across the turf. The cow is waiting at the yard gate. I steal to my lady's window, and cast some gravel at it. The golden curls are being put in order for dinner. I am asked whether I am going to sit at table that fright? I am bidden to make myself respectable directly. Suppose somebody should call! Whoever heard of dining in slippers! Men are such untidy creatures!

I remain firm in my slippers, and effect a compromise by passing through my dressing-room. When I am told that I am the very laziest man in the whole country, my pride is aroused. The rising sun greeted a certain person who vowed that he would do a day's idleness, and that person is now strolling into the dining-room, guiltless of one useful act since the sun rose. He is told that he should have taken a long walk to get him an appetite; that he might have spent his afternoon in balancing the household expenses. But he has done nothing—absolutely nothing—and he is honestly proud of the achievement.

Pleasant dinner, when order and taste are of the company! Few dishes, but each stamped with the learned approval of Mrs. Goldencurls before they appear. Bright eyes watching the pleasure with which the proprietor (or slave) of Mrs. Goldencurls commends the preparation of the pet delicacy, the tomato.

"The coffee is my business." Such, the observation of Mrs. Goldencurls; one, I expect, the sly puss stole from Brillat Savarin. Liqueur, some Benedictine I brought from Normandy. Gossip about the monks turned liqueur merchants, and gathering herbs upon the flowery downs round about Fécamp for their exquisite strong water, carries the sunset quite out of the room, and the fingers that picked the strawberries, and stewed the tomato, and roughened my hair in the morning, are busy at the lamp.

LITTLE WITCH AND THE MISERS.

IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

"CAW! caw!" cried an old rook, turning out of his nest in the wood, sweeping down the street, and dashing his wings against little Witch's window-pane. Just at the same moment the sun, very red in the face, struggled above the heads of the trees and shot a furious glance after the rook, who had dared to get up before him. Between the rook and the sun little Witch was well wakened: and she got up too.

"What noise is that?" cried the elder of the two old Miss Scarecrows, sitting up in her bed with her dreadful curl-papers on

end. She was shouting into the next room to her sister. You see the rooms were rather empty, and the walls were thin, and the voices could be heard quite well calling from one chamber to the other; which was very convenient in a house where there was no servant to answer the bell.

"It is nothing," replied the voice of the other Miss Scarecrow, "nothing but the little wench next door raking out the kitchen-grate. Very wasteful of her to be lighting fire so early. It happens every morning. Can't you get accustomed to it, Tabitha?"

"No, I can't!" returned Tabitha. "Troublesome busybody that the girl is!"

When the Scarecrow family met that day to eat what they called their breakfast, it was found that the Brother Scarecrow had also been startled out of his sleep by a noise in the next house. And he complained of it bitterly.

"Sleep," he said, "is a luxury which one may indulge in with safety. It costs nothing. Once you have invested money in a bed and covering there is no more expense. It is as cheap to sleep twelve hours as three, and the more sleep you take the less food you require. You are not hungry when you are unconscious. Therefore I hold it a criminal thing to disturb the rest of others by untimely rising. Something must be done to check our neighbours in a dangerous career. They run the risk of robust health, with its ruinous accompaniment—a keen appetite for meals. It is pitiable to see young people rushing thus headlong to destruction."

"Besides, being up so early leaves a great deal of time on their hands," said Miss Tabitha; "and if they should take to climbing—young people are fond of climbing—and should begin to dig in our garden!"

Brother Scarecrow turned pale and his head drooped.

"How foolish!" squeaked Miss Seraphina. "Those tall young women climb walls!"

"The youngest is not so tall," said the gruff Tabitha, "and she's as nimble as a kid. I saw her in her own garden the other morning digging up the earth with a spade. It is she who rises so early. I am sure there is something in it."

"This is too dreadful!" said Brother Scarecrow, faintly. And he immediately became so ill that they were obliged to put him to bed.

It was generally believed by the inhabitants of the street that the Scarecrow

family had been living in number two ever since the street had been built, and judging by the aspect of the place, without even consulting the almost obliterated date upon the gable, this was a long time ago. So long ago, indeed, that the above-mentioned popular faith cast a lurid gleam of ghostliness over the existence of these Scarecrows. The family consisted of Tabitha and Seraphina, and the brother, who was, if possible, older than the sisters. Upon the parchment visages of all three Time had scribbled such innumerable hieroglyphics that it had become impossible to decipher what any of them meant. They were all three ugly to look upon, with features that reminded one of ancient wooden idols, so hacked and notched, and dinged were they by a curious co-operation of years and Nature. In figure they reminded one of the besom which was ordered to stand forth upon two legs surmounted by a head.

The two ladies frightened Witch and her sisters when they passed by the windows to take an airing. They wore short black gowns, and their elbows were pinioned to their sides under their scanty shawls. Their bonnets were huge black things that fluttered dreadfully as the heads shook under them, making them nod like the plumes on a hearse. When they walked, they threw their feet about as if those members had been loose at the ankles. When an echo of their conversation could be heard, things became worse; for Miss Tabitha had a gruff guttural voice, while Miss Seraphina spoke in shrill tones like the rasping of a file upon wires. As for the old gentleman, he was seldom seen, except walking up and down the waste garden at the back of the house, cleaning a bunch of keys, and stopping often to gaze down on one spot of the earth in a corner. Into this mould he would stare for hours at a time, as if some precious seed were buried there, and he watched so earnestly, so patiently, for the first green speck that should tell him it had not rotted into nothingness in its grave. Thus much was seen of the Scarecrow family by the outer world. A charwoman, who had been in and out, told how the two old women uncovered their scraggy shoulders, like the finest ladies in the land, before they sat down to their dinner of dry crusts and scraps of mouldy cheese. Also of how the morsels of coal were counted as they were dropped into the kitchen grate, and how the sisters sat, each with her feet upon a cat for

warmth; said cats living exclusively upon mice, with chance bones from a neighbour's larder.

Now, Witch, the offensive neighbour, was a seventh daughter; and so it was no wonder that there was something unusual about her. She looked like a changeling among her six sisters, who were all very tall and slim, with long throats and noses, pale eyes and mouths, and very light hair, which they dressed in the fashion, and which occupied most of their time. When they all swooped into a room, it was like the perching and pluming of a flight of storks. Little Witch was quite swallowed up in the crowd that they made, and when one did catch a glimpse of her she looked, as I have said, like a changeling, so different was she from the rest. It was not that Witch was so little, but that the sisters were so big. She scarcely reached up to their shoulders. And then her eyes were brown, each carrying a spark of fire, though shaded about by many dark touches under the brows. Her lips made a deep red against her white teeth, and her cheeks were almost always dimpled, for she had a habit of smiling. There was nothing magnificent about her nose, and her hair twined back from her face and hung in a mass on her shoulders. Her head was subject to fits of cold bathing, and was often seen to go shaking itself merrily like a water dog, to the dismay of the sisters, who frizzed their locks with hot irons: a process utterly ruined by damp. She did not possess one feature or attribute of the family. She was short, where the sisters were long; round, where the sisters were square; red, where the sisters were pale, and pale where the sisters were red. But then the sisters were, all six, fine women, and Witch was only a comely little girl. As for her name, that came of her being so quick-witted; for when she hit upon things that they never could have thought of, the sisters would nod their fair heads, and say, "She is a perfect witch!" And so "witch" came to be a household word.

The household consisted of Witch and the sisters. These seven had neither father, mother, brother, nor servant. The eldest of all was old enough to be a mother to the rest, but she had no taste for being a mother; and so the duty devolved upon little Witch; for, next to the eldest, the youngest is the most important member of a family. Witch was mother and servant too. She wheedled the butcher, bargained

with the chimneysweep, handled brush and frying-pan, and darned stockings for all the seven pairs of feet. And the sisters thought very highly of themselves for allowing her to make herself so useful. Besides, they had seen better days, which made things come hardly upon them; whereas Witch had only seen just so much of those days as furnished a sort of golden rim to the little memories of a very short childhood. And she took as kindly to the rough side of life as if she had been made for it.

They had seen their better days in their paternal dwelling at O'Thriftless-Town, in the county of Mayo, where their dear father had faithfully followed the hounds as long as his old red coat would hold together. The six elder sisters had had their seasons in Dublin, had danced at the castle, and promenaded in the squares, and gone a-riding in the Phoenix Park; while little Witch was enjoying a delicious little bogtrotting life of her own among the sweet mountain wilds; while father O'Thriftless was falling under the table at fox-hunting dinners, and the poor mother was striving hard to do her duty by elders and youngers, to keep the wolf from the door, and to hold her head high. In this struggle she had broken down at last, and, in spite of debt and vengeful tradesmen, had been allowed to retire peacefully under the mould, where not the most impertinent dun would dare to knock upon the door of her narrow house. Hither, to this home of freedom, her husband soon followed her, exchanging his gay old hunting-coat for a shroud. Then did the wolf at last enter at that door, long so bravely guarded—entered at a bound, and devoured everything in one meal. Then did the sisters, amid their tears, gather up the mite that was left for them to live upon, and fly off out of sight and hearing of their pitying neighbours. Witch had been for staying in the country, in a cabin, if need be, within hearing of the sea, and within reach of the old graveyard where the two loved heads had their rest; for remaining on good terms with the birds and the lambs, at least, if not with the best country families. She would have dressed herself all in the red-flannel peasant garb of the country, and walked to and fro on the heather in her pretty bare feet, under the very noses of the gentry, rather than have left her happy hills. But this was not to be. The six sisters packed up their tiny all, and flew off to bury themselves in the city.

Here, in this dingy street, they had

buried themselves. A very small house would not hold so many tall young women, and when they took up their abode in a dwelling that would contain them, they shook their bewildered heads and said, "We must do without a servant." This was very sad. Bella burnt her fingers and blackened her face trying to light the fire; Barbara cut her hands chopping the vegetables; Kathleen shed tears into the frying-pan, through mingled grief and smoke; and Alice fell down the stairs, whilst descending them backwards for sweeping purposes. By the time Witch had done eking out morsels of carpet, and coaxing scanty hangings to clothe the naked window-frames, she found that she had now got to nurse every one of her six sisters in turn. Things were not mended when one day a carriage dashed up to the door. Some acquaintance of other times had found them out, and come to call. Sisters stood wringing their hands, in the parlour, in the hall, on the stairs. Which of them would be bold enough to open that dingy hall-door? It was bad enough to answer to the butcher and the baker; but Lady O'Dowd's footman had carried their prayer-books to church before now. A subdued howl of anguish arose from six mouths.

"They do not know me," said Witch. "Let me go." She twisted her long hair into a tight knot on her head, pinned over it a white handkerchief, in the shape of a round cap, tied a white muslin window-blind before her for an apron: and had the hall-door open in a trice.

The ladies were not at home to visitors, said the neat little maid to the tall footman; but cards were graciously received. A few of the sisters cried over the occurrence all the evening. But Witch thought they had had a lucky escape. And it was acknowledged that Witch had found her vocation.

On the morning before mentioned, after disturbing her neighbours as has been described, Witch fulfilled her usual tasks and finished making her noises. She put the kettle on the fire. She drew down the blind in the parlour so that the sun might not make away with the small bit of colour that was left in the carpet. The milk had been taken, and the breakfast bread, when Witch put on her little old cloak and her shabby brown hat, tucked a battered tin colour-box under her arm, shut her hall-door, and set off at a swift trot, out of the shabby street, all along a golden path towards the bristling wood where the rook lived who came to call her of mornings.

Witch was going to make a little money till breakfast time. Not a great deal, but with the butcher so urgent about his bill, and Bella in tears over a shabby bonnet, nothing was too small to be despised. Drawing was the one accomplishment which this child possessed. Each of her sisters could make a noise on the old piano if required, but Witch had never learned a note of music. Give her, however, that old tin colour-box, a sunbeam, a patch of yellow moss, a red-breast swaying on a tangle of wild-briers, a purple cave hollowed among the leaves, and I warrant you she would make you a little picture which would set you longing for a taste of the fresh air. This lucky power she owed to nobody living. A forgotten ancestor had willed it to her, and the capital of talent having accumulated through lying untouched during many generations, had swelled wonderfully by the time it was delivered over to Witch. It came amongst her fingers quite naturally at the waving of a tiny wand which is used to be called a pencil. It had supplied her childhood with fantastic joys, and now it helped to satisfy her girlhood's healthy appetite for bread-and-butter, besides gilding her early hours with such a sheen of delight as cast a reflection over all the after-drudgery of the day. For Witch was accustomed to receive sundry pieces of silver counted out of the till of an important shop in the city, in exchange for so many inches of summer morning mounted on white board. Inches which brought a greater number of guineas to the shopkeeper's pocket than he was pleased to give of shillings to little Witch.

When Witch had gained her favourite spot in the wood, some one started out of the leaves to meet her. "Good morning! good morning!" rang two eager voices, answering one another joyously, and the leaves flapped, and also seemed to clasp hands, and the birds to twitter echoes of the greeting. Witch's friend was a slender youth, rather starved-looking, with a sweet pinched face, and large-sad eyes. He looked as if his spirit had quite outgrown his body, just as his body had outgrown his clothing. His sleeves were short and his shoes were old and large, and the soul of a poet was looking out of his wan, boyish face.

"I thought you would never come," he said, as they sat down each on a mossy stone, and looked at one another, shading the sun from their eyes with their hands. "I have been here since the first light."

"Ah, but you had no grates to polish,

and no fires to kindle," said Witch, as she unpacked her box, and began to flourish her brushes.

"No, but I worked very late last night to finish this," he said, shaking out some flashing folds of silk into the sunshine. "See, it is to tie over your head while you paint."

"What a gorgeous little kerchief!" cried Witch. "It is the work of a poet-weaver indeed! It is as good as a little poem!" she said, turning it on this side and that in the sun. The pattern was a wonderful arabesque of the most soft and brilliant colours interwoven with gold. "Oh dear! oh dear! these bright silks cost money. Where did you get it, Barry?"

"I saved it," said the lad.

"And went without your dinner, and your breakfast, and your sleep! Oh, you foolish boy!" And Witch began to cry.

"Don't, Witch!" said Barry. "It was good for me. I am not hungry, indeed, and it was as you say, as good as a poem to me—at least it is part of one—I mean I made one out of it. See here, all the colours were ideas to me. This purple was mournfulness, this crimson was love, these gold threads were little rays of joy darting backward and forward through my fancy with my shuttle. The little song is about you. Shall I show it to you?"

The poem was read. Any one who would care to see it will find it in the volume of *Weaver's Songs*, afterwards published by Barry, and received into favour by the world.

"It is beautiful, beautiful!" cried Witch, with the tears flashing from her eyes into her lap, "and all the more wonderful because pure imagination. The Witch of your poem is not this hum-drum little person. But it will delight the world all the same."

"No, no," said Barry, eagerly, "it is the poetry that is mean. I have things in my heart which I cannot put into words. I ache with them tossing about at night. I dream of them sitting at my loom all day. I see things in nature, in life, in you, which I strive to grasp that I may sing of them over the earth. They float, float away from my touch. The words that I put upon my thoughts are like foolish masks. One can hardly see any eyes of meaning shining through them. Sometimes I think that if I had been born to the speaking of some other tongue, I should have been able to utter myself."

The lad flung himself against a tree, with a great glow of sadness in his eyes.

"You deceive yourself," said Witch, vehemently. "You have too much work and

too little to eat, and you get sick fancies. You are a poet in your own tongue, and if you had been born a negro you would have made poetry out of broken English. The whole world will get up in a mass and tell you about it one day."

The boy grasped both her hands, and trembled with delight. "How beautiful it is to be believed in!" he said.

Then Witch spread her brilliant kerchief over her shoulders to divert Barry from his sad thoughts, and danced about softly in the sun, so as to make the colours burn, and the gold threads glitter. Her drawing was finished, and perhaps she should get seven shillings for it to-day. So there was gaiety of heart, as well as leisure for a dance. Witch's eyes were radiant above the red and purple and gold on her bosom, and her long dark tresses rose and fell with the motion of her figure, half shrouding the dazzling garment. She and the sun danced together among the trees.

"You are a living poem, indeed!" said Barry, rushing to follow her. But Witch waved him softly backwards with her pretty brown hands, singing mock incantations to the wood sprites all the time: then suddenly linked her arm in his, and these two children went flying down the chequered slope of the wood, through the light, through the shade, snatching at the branches, and balancing one another, till they arrived at the bottom, laughing and breathless.

Witch did not show her kerchief to the sisters. If it had been anything they could wear to make them smart going to church, or for a walk, she would have held herself to be selfish in possessing it. But as well might one wear a macaw in one's bonnet as display such a kerchief in the street. It was too precious and wonderful, and redolent of poetry to be handled and coveted, and turned to some foolish use. Witch owned a little box with a key. And in it she deposited her treasure.

But sometimes she took it out very early of mornings, when she could not go to the wood to see Barry, and gave it an airing up and down the little ragged garden, just to see the sun flashing on it, and to feel it glittering on her bosom, as Barry's love glittered on her life. Now it chanced one morning that Miss Seraphina Scarecrow had wakened very early, and had come down a part of her staircase, wrapt in unsightly gear, to take a stolen peep at the world from her lobby window. Poor Miss Sera-

phina had a half worn-out touch of sentimentality in her composition. Starving, and saving, and growing drearily ugly, had not taken it from her. Only she was careful to keep it out of sight of her sister and brother. So sometimes of mornings she came thus to the lobby window, pressing her sad gnome-like face to the pane, and gazing across one frowsy faded tree to the light of the breaking dawn. Thus doing she beheld Witch, a gay fluttering little figure, dancing lightly and slowly up and down the path with her brilliant kerchief spread over her shoulders, and her hair rising and falling and floating behind her, while the sunlight picked wonderful glories out of Barry's gilded web. Miss Seraphina saw, and remained riveted where she stood, gazing with distended eyes. She tottered backward, and sat down feebly upon the nearest step, while all her curl-papers shook and rustled. By-and-by she arose and went back to the window, but dancing, dazzling Witch was gone.

Seraphina climbed her flight of stairs, and went into her sister's room.

"Tabitha!" she said.

Tabitha, waking, responded gruffly.

"Tabitha, the little girl next door has got a paroquet kerchief."

"Nonsense!" ejaculated Miss Tabitha.

"But she has," moaned Seraphina. "I have seen it on her shoulders. Green and crimson, and purple and yellow. They are all there, burning and glistening just as they used."

"Some tenpenny plaid out of the nearest shop," growled Tabitha.

"No, no," said Seraphina, "it burned with gold. It is the paroquet."

"And what if it be?" said Tabitha.

"There is only one in the world," sobbed Seraphina.

"You are an idiot!" said Tabitha. "Will you try and get a little sense? If you don't begin soon it will be too late. There, get away! What an appetite you will have for breakfast after being up at such an hour!" And snubbed Seraphina went back to her bed, and lay staring at the pictures in the damp on the ceiling. And her poor heart ached.

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